

education, occurred to no one at this period. In all the literature on this great subject it is impossible to find a proposal to endow schools or colleges out of the property of the Church. Even two centuries later, John ICnox was told by the Regent Murray that such a scheme was a 'devout imagination,'¹ and if John Wyclift'e had made the suggestion to the Duke of Lancaster, it would have seemed still more absurd to him. But, although there was no proposal to devote the money directly to public ends, the Reformers argued that tho State would be as much benefited as the Church, if some of the vast wealth of the ecclesiastics passed into the hands of lay proprietors. * Secular lordships, that clerks have full falsely against God's law and spend them so wickedly, shuldeu be given by the King and witty (wise) lords to poor gentlemen, that wolden justly govern the people, and maintain the land against enemies. And then might our land be stronger by many thousand men of arms than it is now, without any new cost of lords, or taliage of the poor commons, and be discharged of great heavy rent, and wicked customs brought up by covetous clerks, and of many talliaiges and extorsions, by which they be now cruelly pilled and robbed.'¹

There was much truth in this argument. The clergy had an undue quantity of the wealth and laud of the country in their hands. It was difficult to tax any of it fully ; for the Papal Court was carrying on a rival system of taxation on Church lands, which made it impossible that they should pay their full duty to the State. The wealth of tho friars might not be taxed at all. Meanwhile the spiritual courts, by extorting money from the laity, rendered still poorer the only part of the population that was fully taxable. It is not, therefore to be wondered at, that when bad times and war-taxation began to bring general distress on all classes, the grievances of the State against the Church should come to the front.

But there is a weakness in WyelifTe's proposal. If, as he suggests, the * King and witty lords * were to distribute ecclesiastical property among lay proprietors, * witty lords,* such a0 John of Gaunt and Lord Percy, would be far more likely to keep the monastic and episcopal estates for themselves than to give